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Examination of the opinions of teachers working in preschool educational institutions about family involvement

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to identify opinions of pre-school education teachers about family involvement. Sample of study consists of 120 pre-school education teachers in Konya city center. Research was performed with the survey model method. Data were collected with the questionnaire form titled “Family Involvement in Pre-school Educational Institutions” which has been prepared by researchers. Frequency and percentage rate were used in the analysis of data collected.

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Keywords: Family involvement; Pre-school; Teachers’ opinion.

1. Introduction

Pre-school period underlies the life of human. In this period of time, it’s very important for children to be loved and cherished by parents, to cover their needs and protect their health. In addition to this, development of children must be supported in all respects during this period of time.

When pre-school educational institutions are examined in our country, it’s seen that programs are child-centered and information/skill centered. However, in order to educate children without isolating from their family and increase functionality of pre-school educational institutions, it must be attempted to make pre-school education programs widespread that’ll provide service parents as well as child and to focus on family together with the child, instead of programs which just focus on child and try to complete inadequate information and skills.

In the understanding of modern education, point aimed cannot be reached with an education program which does not include child’s family. Therefore, family environment that plays an active role in education and development of child must be supported with pre-school education programs (Üstünoğlu, 1990b).

To make pre-school educational institutions efficient, realize determined aims and gains, support behaviors acquired in pre-school educational institutions, constitute a life chain between home and school, make home a stimulating environment for child is only possible by making parents develop positive attributes and behaviors to their children and establish positive communications with their children and also by providing active participation of parents in programs applied in pre-school educational institutions (Çağdaş and Şahin Seçer, 2007).

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Unfortunately, it's not always possible to prepare and apply comprehensive programs for parents, but pre-school educational institutions may provide enlightenment and development of parents to be a better mother and father for their children by involving them in school activities and establishing a bond between school and family. The first step for the constitution of this dynamic relationship net is communication with family. Those who will provide this first communication and interaction are pre-school education teachers, but such an effort of the pre-school education teacher is possible mainly their belief in necessity and use of family involvement (Aral, Kandır and Can Yaşar, 2000).

Family involvement; can be defined in many ways such as teaching parents the context specific skills, giving social and emotional support, information exchange between parents and professionals, participation of parents in a group, development of suitable parents and child relations and helping parents in reaching social resources (Kandır and Ersoy, 2003).

Objective of Research

Overall objective of this research is to identify perspectives of pre-school education teachers about family involvement. Within this overall objective, answers for following questions were searched:

1. What are the opinions of teachers working in pre-school educational institutions about whether or not they need an education on family involvement?
2. Did teachers working in pre-school educational institutions participate in any seminar or any scientific conference about family involvement?
3. What are the opinions of teachers working in pre-school educational institutions about family involvement?
4. What kinds of activities do teachers working in pre-school educational institutions in order to provide family involvement?
5. What are the reasons for teachers working in pre-school educational institutions to fall realizing family involvement?

2. Method

2.1. Research model

In this research, opinions of pre-school education teachers about "Family Involvement" were taken. From this aspect, research was performed in survey model quality. In such models, event, individual or subject discussed in this research are attempted to be defined within their condition and as is. Any attempt to change or influence them is not shown (Karasar, 2005).

2.2. Population and sample

The population of research is consisted of teachers working in the Nursery Class of Elementary School, Independent Nursery School, Private Kindergarten and Nursery School, Vocational Girls' School's Nursery and SHCEK (Social Services and Children protection Institution) affiliated with Ministry of National Education in 2005-2006 academic year which are located at Central Sub-provinces of Konya Province. And sample of research consisted of 50 schools selected with random cluster sampling method from 145 institutions of Konya Provincial Directorate of National Education and 120 of 303 pre-school education teachers working in central sub-provinces of Konya.

Table 1. Demographic Features of Participants

Professional Service Periods of Participants	f	%
1-5 years	32	26,6
6-10 years	34	28,8
11-15 years	28	23,3
16-20 years	21	17,5
21+	5	4,3
Type of School they work		
Nursery Class of Elementary School	77	64,2
Independent Nursery School	21	17,5
Private Kindergarten and Nursery School	12	10
Vocational Girls' School's Nursery	7	5,8
SHCEK	1	0,8

Other	2	1,7
Type of School graduated		
Child. Devlp.and Edu.Voc. Higher School	17	14,2
Sec. School Teaching	19	15,8
Child. Devlp. Teaching	24	20
Nursery School Teachin	50	41,6
Open College Sec. Edu Teaching	2	1,6
Other	8	6,6

Data Collection and Analysis

The questionnaire form titled “Family Involvement in Pre-school Educational Institutions” that was prepared by researchers and submitted for expert review was used in order to determine personal information and perspectives of teachers about family involvement. This questionnaire form consists of 2 parts. In the first part, personal information related to teachers (professional service periods, types of school they work and types of school they graduated) take place. Also it's asked teachers whether or not they need in-service training about family involvement and whether or not they participated in any seminar or any scientific conference regarding family involvement. And in the second part, there are 3 sub-titles. Opinions of teachers about family involvement in pre-school education take place under the first sub-title, what teachers did to provide family involvement under the second sub-title and reasons to fail in realizing family involvement under the third sub-title.

Frequency and percentage rates were used in the analysis of data collected.

3. Findings and Discussion

Opinions of Teachers about whether or not they need any training Family Involvement

68% of teachers stated that they need training about family involvement and 32% determined that they do not need such training.

This finding reveals that a great majority of teachers do not needs any training about family involvement.

Opinions of Teachers about whether or not they participated in any seminar or scientific conference regarding family involvement

71% of teachers stated that they did not participate in any seminar or scientific conference about family involvement, while only 29% specified that they received training or participated in a scientific conference about family involvement.

Table 2. Opinions of Teachers working in Pre-school Educational Institutions about Family Involvement

Your opinions about family involvement in Pre-school Education	f	%
I think it strengthens parent-teacher association	104	86.6
I think it provides children the most utilization from the opportunities of pre-school education.	94	78.3
I think it's necessary to provide financial support for school	28	23.3
I think it provides that family develops positive attitudes to schools	104	86.6
I think it contributes to parents training	113	94.1
I think it will help families to make their home stimulating for children	88	73.3
I think it'll help families to spend more quality time with their children	106	88.3
I think it's necessary when seeing behavior and adjustment disorder in children	87	72.5
I think it's necessary for matters that families' need related to their children.	74	61.6
I think children can be provided education without family involvement	19	15.8
I think families will not provide contribution to child education.	16	13.3
I think family involvement will prevent education	3	2.2
I think families will not be willing about family involvement	8	6.6
I have no idea about family involvement	3	2.5
Others	3	2.5

From the findings in Table 3, it's seen that quite high rate of teachers about 94 % stated that they think that family involvement provide children the most utilization from the opportunities of pre-school education, 88% think that family involvement will help families to spend more quality time with their children, 86 % think that it develops positive attitudes of family to schools and strengthens parent-teacher association. The rate of those who had no idea about family involvement or who think that it prevents education is only 2.5%.

As a result of research in 2006, Çaltık and Kandır reached that nearly whole the teachers (91.1) think that family involvement increases achievement of program. As the purpose of school and family is to provide a better educational environment, cooperation between teachers and parents will both facilitate teacher to reach their goals and provide continuance of behavioral changes expected from children through parent training. (<http://yayim.meb.gov.tr/dergiler/151/kandir.htm>.)

Table 3. Opinions of Teachers working in Pre-school Educational Institutions regarding activities they gave place to provide family involvement

What are the activities given places to provide family involvement?	f	%
I talk to families at coming and leaving hours	103	85.8
I talk to families on phone	97	80.8
I send families news letters	67	55.8
I correspond with families.	39	32.5
I prepare booklets for families	45	37.5
I prepare bulletin boards for families	67	55.8
I prepare poster for families	20	16.6
I exhibit our photos in activities we did for families and also send them these photos by transferring a cd	36	30
I prepare and use wish box to take requests of families	26	21.6
I use article box to provide contributions of families to education	11	9.2
I make library to meet educational requirements of parents regarding children.	19	15.8
I provide participation of families in daily programs.	50	41.6
I held information meetings for families	92	76.6
I have individual interviews with families	112	93.3
I make home visits to families.	59	49.2
Others	2	1.6

From the findings in Table 3, it's seen that rate of teachers having individual interviews with families is 93%, rate of teachers talking to them at coming and leaving hours is 85%, those talking to families on phone is 80%, those holding information meetings for families is 76%, those using article box, preparing booklets and posters is 15% and below.

Kuşin (1991) performed a pilot study with a limited group about how nursery school teachers and parents look at parent-teacher association. 50 teachers working in 18 nursery schools in Kadıköy region and 50 parents were applied a questionnaire. Findings obtained at the end of study revealed that 48 of 50 teachers who participated in questionnaire (96%) found informing families about education in school "very important" and 2 of them found it just "important". It's seen that this information is made by teacher in one or a couple of way. "Monthly, quarterly or annual meetings" took the first place with 70%. Invitation of parents to school took the second place with 64%, "informing on phone" in the third place with 30%, "short meetings" in the fourth place with 29% and "reports sent to home" in the fifth place with 22%. It's observed that training conferences by the trainers in school in the final places and home visits took in the last place.

Kaya (2002) examined opinions of parents about their interest and involvement in programs applied in pre-school educational institutions and also contribution of said institutions to the family education. As a result of research, it's seen that parents met with teachers when they had problems and these talks are made nearly everyday. Besides, parents were mostly informed about daily activities of children in school, and it's provided with parent meetings, studies and program put up on school panel.

From the findings of researches by Çaltık ve Kandır (2006), it's seen that main activities benefited by teachers to provide family involvement in program are; ensuring participation with some activities such as parent meetings, information meetings, tours etc and giving information about their professions. In another finding of research, it's seen that greetings, phone conversations, bulletin and bulletin boards, news letters, booklets, brochures, posters

photos and bidirectional correspondences were given place by teachers regarding techniques they used to communicate with families.

Findings of research presented supports findings obtained at the end of this research. It's seen that teachers gave place all the activities mainly individual meetings, greetings, phone conversations and news letters in order to realize family involvement.

Table 4. What are the reasons of teachers fail to realize family involvement

What are the reasons you fail to realize family involvement?	f	%
Inadequate physical conditions of institution	37	30.8
Insufficiency of financial potential of institution	27	22.5
Failure of institutional directors in providing support about family involvement	18	15
Unwillingness of families	50	41.6
Not having sufficient information and skill about family involvement	21	17.5
Other	11	9.1

It's seen in Table 4 that reasons the teachers fail to realize family involvement are as following; 41% unwillingness of families, 30% inadequate physical conditions of institution and 22% insufficiency of financial potential of institution. Teachers who said that they could not realize family involvement, because they do not have sufficient information were 17,5%, while 15% of them reasoned that institutional directors did not give support.

A similar research was conducted by Ensari and Zembat (1999). In research, influences of management styles on family involvement in pre-school education programs were examined. In the findings obtained, it's seen that thoughts of directors and families were different from each other in comparing their opinions about preventions of parent-teacher association. Families consider attitude of director as a prevention in the first place (22,17 %) and directors consider neglect of families about parent association as an obstacle in the first place. Thoughts about other factors showed as prevention are nearly the same. Lack of time (21,37 %), economic conditions (13,22%), communication disorder (11,23%) are considered among primary reasons.

Reasons to fail in realizing family involvement for teachers:

1. Believing in that planning activities of family involvement take too long time.
2. Not knowing how to encourage families to involve in programs.
3. Not knowing how to carry out involvement programs.
4. Thinking that families would go over their limit and this would cause a complication.
5. Thinking that families would transfer their friends some important information and put them in a tight spot.
6. Job stress.
7. Family's jealousy towards child and teacher relationship (Quoted: Zembat, 2003).

Finally, reasons to fail in realizing family involvement for teachers is mainly unwillingness of families. In order to reach a quality education, a healthy parent-teacher association is needed and to have a healthy association, it's required the establishment of open communication of parties with each other and perception of importance of children in our life (Şahin and Ünver, 2005).

4. Suggestions

From the research findings,

1. As participation rate of teachers in seminars or scientific meetings related to family involvement is low: considering that family involvement increases the achievement of program, teachers must be informed via in-service trainings/courses/seminars related to planning and application of family involvement activities.
2. Similar studies can be performed on more different population and greater sample groups and their results can be tested.
3. Experimental studies can be performed by researchers from the results of such research.

4. In the in-service seminars prepared by Ministry of National Education for teachers working in pre-school educational institutions, family involvement and family education can be attached more importance.

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